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SUBJECT: SERB AMBASSADOR CONCERNED ABOUT KOSOVO, ISLAM

REF: A. PRISTINA 660 ET AL.

[B](#). 03 VATICAN 5351

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) DARKO TANASKOVIC, SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO (SAM) AMBASSADOR TO THE HOLY SEE, PASSED THE AMBASSADOR MAY 19 SAM'S DISCUSSION PAPER ON KOSOVO (REF A) AND IMPRESSED UPON HIM HIS CONCERNS ABOUT THE SAFETY OF THE SERBIAN MINORITY IN THE PROVINCE. TANASKOVIC DESCRIBED A GROWING EXTREMISM AMONG MUSLIMS IN THE BALKANS, AND WAS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE. THE AMBASSADOR STRESSED THE CONTINUING USG COMMITMENT TO THE BALKANS AND OUR CONDEMNATION OF THE MARCH VIOLENCE IN KOSOVO. END SUMMARY.

SAM'S KOSOVO PAPER

[1](#)2. (SBU) SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO (SAM) AMBASSADOR TO THE HOLY SEE DARKO TANASKOVIC CALLED ON THE AMBASSADOR MAY 19 TO BRIEF HIM ON SAM'S PLAN FOR KOSOVO. TANASKOVIC PASSED US A COPY OF SAM'S "PLAN FOR THE POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE SITUATION IN KOSOVO AND METOHIJA," NOTING THAT IT HAD BEEN PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT AND THAT FM DRASKOVIC HAD SPOKEN ON IT TO THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL. THE AMBASSADOR STRESSED THE USG'S CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO THE BALKANS, NOTING THE SACRIFICE OF THE THREE U.S. CIVILIAN POLICE OFFICERS KILLED IN KOSOVO RECENTLY. HE ALSO REITERATED OUR CONDEMNATION OF THE MARCH VIOLENCE IN THE PROVINCE.

MORE PROTECTION NEEDED FOR SERBS

[1](#)3. (SBU) TANASKOVIC APPEALED FOR GREATER PROTECTION FROM THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FOR THE SERB MINORITY IN KOSOVO, PITCHING THE ISSUE IN PART AS ONE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM. HE BEMOANED THE DESTRUCTION OF CHURCHES AND MONASTERIES IN THE MARCH VIOLENCE, AND SAID THAT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY NEEDED TO PROTECT THE SERBS AS THEY HAD ONCE PROTECTED KOSOVAR ALBANIANS. HE NOTED THAT HE AND HIS FAMILY HAD BEEN IN BELGRADE DURING THE 1999 NATO BOMBING. ALTHOUGH HE AND MOST SERBS DID NOT HOLD THIS MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THE U.S., THEY EXPECTED US TO BE CONSISTENT IN OUR EFFORTS TO PROTECT MINORITIES. "NO ONE" THINKS THAT KOSOVO WILL BE PART OF SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO IN THE SAME WAY IT WAS BEFORE, TANASKOVIC SAID. BUT, HE CONTINUED, THAT DID NOT MEAN KOSOVO WAS READY FOR INDEPENDENCE.

RADICAL ISLAM GROWING IN BALKANS; DIALOGUE CRUCIAL

[1](#)4. (SBU) TANASKOVIC, A SCHOLAR OF ISLAM WHO SERVED PREVIOUSLY IN TURKEY (REF B), SAID HE WAS ALARMED AT THE GROWING RADICALISM OF THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA. HE SAID THAT THERE WAS A NEW NETWORK OF SCHOOLS AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS THAT WERE PRODUCING A MUCH DIFFERENT BRAND OF MUSLIM THAN HE HAD KNOWN IN THE REGION IN THE PAST. AUTHORITIES IN THE REGION NEEDED TO FIND SOME ANSWER TO THIS RADICALIZATION, HE SAID. "BUT," HE ASKED, "HOW DO YOU MAKE A MOVEMENT COMPATIBLE WITH DEMOCRACY THAT IS, AT ITS HEART, SO ANTI-DEMOCRATIC?" TANASKOVIC WAS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT ATTEMPTS AT INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE, NOTING THAT IT SEEMED AS IF THE SAME FEW MODERATE MUSLIMS SHOWED UP AT ALL THE INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE EVENTS. INDEED, THESE FEW SEEMED SOMEWHAT MARGINALIZED FROM THE REST OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD. THE AMBASSADOR ALLOWED THAT THE OBSTACLES TO MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE WERE FORMIDABLE, BUT ENCOURAGED TANASKOVIC TO WORK WITH POST AS WE PRESSED FORWARD IN OUR EFFORTS ON THIS FRONT. THE AMBASSADOR SAID WE COULD NOT GIVE UP ON WHAT HE CONSIDERED PERHAPS THE MOST CRUCIAL ISSUE FACING THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TODAY.

NICHOLSON

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